



United States Department of Agriculture

Beaver Meadows Campground Decommissioning Project Scoping Document



Photo of Beaver Meadows Site 5 in 2013, two years after closure. Photo by Linda White, Recreation Planner.



Forest Service

**Allegheny
National Forest**

**Forest County,
Pennsylvania**

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Who is proposing the project?

The Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Allegheny National Forest is initiating an environmental analyses to decommission the Beaver Meadows Campground pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

What are we proposing to do?

The Forest Service is proposing to decommission the Beaver Meadows Campground. This would include:

- The removal of the storage building, three toilet buildings, playground equipment, all campsite equipment, all internal gates, the gate at campground entrance, pay phone, all buried utility lines, and any other equipment associated with the camping area;
- Decommissioning (full obliteration) all roads within the campground beyond the intersection with the main day use area road and including all spur roads to individual campsites including removal of road surfacing and culverts; and
- Plugging all water wells.

Please note that this proposal does **not** include the Beaver Meadows Day Use Area or hiking trails. The day use parking area, toilet, boat access, picnic areas, bank fishing, pathway across the dam, hiking trails and access to hiking trails will continue to be maintained for public use. The blueberry site will remain unaffected, as well; and access will be by foot from the day use area.

Where is the project located?

The project area is located in Warrant 3185, Jenks Township, Forest County, Pennsylvania, 4 miles north of Marienville, Pennsylvania. The project lies within Management Area 3.0 (see attached map).

When would the project be implemented?

The decision on the proposal is expected in 2020. Implementation could start in 2020 if funding is available.

Why here and why now?

Purpose and Need

In 2008, the Forest Service completed a recreation facility analysis for the Allegheny National Forest. The recreation facility analysis was a tool designed to help the Forest Service align its developed recreation sites with the unique characteristics of the Allegheny National Forest, projected recreation demands, visitor's expectations, and revenue opportunities.

The recreation facilities analysis for the Allegheny National Forest showed that the campground part of the Beaver Meadows Recreation Area was under-utilized on all scales of measurement – local, regional, and national. The analysis recommended two options for the Beaver Meadows Campground: (1) study the area and determine if it was a suitable location for conversion to an ATV campground or, (2) if that was not feasible, decommission the campground and remove all its assets.

Following the recreation facilities analysis, conversion of the Beaver Meadows Campground to an ATV campground was considered, but was dropped from consideration because:

- Conversion to an ATV campground would require developing or constructing a connecting trail between the Beaver Meadows Campground and the ATV trail network. However, any trail connecting the Beaver Meadows Campground to the ATV trail network would have to cross wetlands or utilize road shoulders, neither of which would be desirable due to safety, environmental, and financial concerns.
- Based on public feedback after the campground was closed following the 2010 operating season, and for many seasons thereafter, people valued the Beaver Meadows Recreation Area and hiking trails most for the solitude and quiet they could experience there.
- Management of the day use area and the surrounding hiking trails for that value of solitude and quiet is not consistent with motorized recreation.

How are we proposing to take action?

Proposed Action

The proposed project would include removal of the storage building and three toilet buildings. The three toilet buildings are structurally sound and could be moved to other locations on the Allegheny National Forest, if possible. However, the storage building is in poor condition and would be demolished, with the material going to an approved landfill. The toilet vaults would be pumped dry and cleaned of any remaining waste material. The vaults would then be broken up and buried and the sites restored to natural conditions. Information kiosks would have their electrical components removed and would be relocated to the Little Drummer Trailhead, Spring Creek Horse Trailheads, or other trailheads where needed.

Virtually all the usable campsite furniture (fire rings and picnic tables) has already been removed and dispersed to other campgrounds on the forest. The remaining unusable equipment (mainly wooden picnic tables that are in poor condition) would be disposed in an approved landfill. Wooden site number posts would be removed and disposed. Culverts under site spurs and the loop roads would be removed. Camp sites and loop and spur roads would be restored to natural conditions. Disturbed soils would be seeded with native species and mulched.

All water wells would be plugged, hydrants removed, and pipes capped. Some pipes may be removed if necessary to allow roads and pads to be restored to natural conditions, but the rest would remain buried to limit ground disturbance.

Any known non-native invasive plants would be treated prior to the start of the decommissioning activities. Disturbed soils would be seeded with native species and mulched with straw. The site would be monitored to ensure that non-native invasive plant treatments were successful and that these non-native invasive plant species do not re-establish themselves.

Implementation of the proposed campground decommissioning may cause temporary disruptions to the day use area and the facilities that support day use at the Beaver Meadows Recreation Area. Heavy equipment traffic on forest road 282 (entrance road to Beaver Meadows) may necessitate temporary closure of the day use area and associated trails. The day use parking area near the boat launch and vault toilet building may be used to stage equipment or materials. Noise from the use of the heavy equipment would temporarily change the nature of the user experience in the area. The portion of Beaver Meadows Trail that uses the campground road as part of its loop would be closed during this project, requiring hikers to use Seldom Seen Trail to complete the loop around the lake until the project is complete and the trail is re-established. Access to the blueberry site would be by walking trail only. The decommissioned campground would be closed to primitive dispersed camping until the site has been fully restored. Allowing primitive dispersed camping within the decommissioned area could be considered sometime in the future.

How does this project implement the Forest Plan?

Management Direction

The Allegheny National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (or Forest Plan) provides a programmatic framework regarding allocation of National Forest System lands and the measures necessary to protect resources. It describes how the Allegheny National Forest should be managed and what resources should be provided by these lands now and into the future. The forest plan provides a vision (USDA-FS 2007, pages 7–16) that includes:

- Provide a diverse range of high quality, sustainable recreation opportunities consistent with public demand and resource capability emphasizing locally popular recreation places and those important to the tourism industry (USDA-FS 2007, page 13).
- Emphasize the development of a mapped, marked, and maintained trail system to minimize user conflicts, impacts to natural resources, respond to changing social needs, and increase access and linkages to communities, forest recreation sites, and special features (USDA-FS 2007, page 13).

Management Area Direction

Lands managed by the Allegheny National Forest are assigned a management area designation. This designation identified the suitable uses, desired conditions, and standards and guidelines for forest management. The project includes the following management area:

Management Area 3.0 – Even-aged Management emphasizes even-aged management to provide a forest that is a mix of predominantly shade intolerant and mid-tolerant hardwood stands of various ages and associated understories and habitat for a diversity of plant and animal species. Primarily road-based recreation opportunities are available throughout this management area, and even-aged silvicultural activities are evident on the landscape. Extensive road development provides access to a variety of features for dispersed recreation. A range of recreation opportunities in a roaded natural setting are provided in this management area. Both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities are provided. Management area direction can be found on pages 113–115 of the Forest Plan.

Proposed activities are consistent with management direction in the Forest Plan and for Management Area 3.0.